provide local hospitality for the persons deputed under the Work Plan.

(6) The MoU shall enter into force on the date of its signing and shall remain valid for a period of five years and shall automatically be renewed for the subsequent period of five years unless either party notifies the other in writing, six months before the expiration of the validity period, of its intention to terminate it. However, the expiry and termination of the MoU shall not prejudice the completion of projects already in progress.

**Enquiry into suicides by Farmers**

139. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to suite:

(a) whether it is a fact that hundreds of farmers have committed suicides during the last six months in various parts of the country;

(b)if so, the details of such suicidal deaths, State-wise, during the last six months;

(c)whether Government have conducted any official survey/enquiry regarding the reasons behind such suicides; if so, the details of enquiry so conducted indicating the recommendationsi-emedial measures suggested; and

(d) whether Government have paid any compensation to the family of the de ceased farmers; if so, the details thereof State-wise and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The Government of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra have reported total suicidal deaths as 236, 29 and 51, respectively. There has been no reports of suicidal deaths from other States.

(c) and (d) It is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments concerned to provide relief to the people affected by natural calamities. The Central Government supplements the efforts of the State Governments by providing additional resources in accordance with the recommendations of the Finance Commissions appointed from time to time. In addition to the annual allocation under Calamity Relief Fund, additional assistance is provided, if any, from the National Fund for Calamity Relief (NFCR), in the event of a calamity of rare severity. An additional assistance of Rs. 12.00 crore was released to the Government of Andhra Pradesh during 1997-98 from the NFCR in the wake of damage to crops, mainly cotton, due to pest attack. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has sanctioned cx-gratia of Rs. 1.00 lakh to the next of kin of each deceased while the Government of Karnataka has sanctioned ex-gratia of Rs. 1.00 lakh each in 13 suicide cases and the Government of Maharashtra has paid Rs. l.OO lakh per family in 12 suicide cases having direct linkage with crop Ioss/ indebtedness and Rs. SO.OOfy-per family in 7 cases having some linkage with crpp loss. In addition, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has announced several package measures of relielf to the affected farming families and the Government of Karnataka has released Rs. 4.00 crore as one-time assistance in the form of input subsidy to the affected small and marginal farmers.

**News Caption 'Panic Grips Farmers as virus wipes out Cotton Crop'**

140. SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN:
DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item cap tioned 'Panic grips farmers as virus wipes out cotton crop' published in the Ob server Business and Politics, dated the 15th October, 1997;

(b)if so, the details and facts thereon;

(c)whether India being an exporter of cotton shall have to import it;

(d)if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the quantity of cotton produced in 1995-96. 1996-97 and 1997-98 with particular reference to Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh as also the imports made during these three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Yes, Sir. '

(b) The cotton crop in many northern States like Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan have been effected mainly by American bollworm and recently by leaf-curl virus. The Government of Rajasthan have intimated that the combined effect of incidence of American Bollworm and Leaf curl virus on the cotton crop has been devastating. Heavy and continuous rains provided favourable conditions for spread of these diseases and also inhibited the pesticidal spray operations which were rendered ineffective. There was an excessive development of foliage and reduction in size of number of cotton bolls.

The standing crop suffered from lodging of the bolls shattered flowers prematurely causing deterioration in quality due to high wind velocity. As per estimate of Government of Rajasthan, there is a production loss of about 2.5 lakh tonnes or 45% of the entire production.

As per information furnished by Government of Haryana, cotton production has gone down from 15.04 lakh bales in 1996-97 to 11.25 lakh bales in 1997-98. The main reasons are:

(i) Inclement weather in September, October and November, 1997.

(ii) Rains during maturing of bolls.

(iii) Infestation of crop with American bollworm **and** Leaf Curl Virus due to inclement weather.

The estimated loss of production due to Leaf Curl Virus is 7-8%, inclement weather 10—12% and pests 5%.

According to information received from Punjab Government, the total production of cotton in the State declined from 19.25 lakh bales in 1996-97 to 9.41 lakh bales in 1997-98. The main reason was heavy intermittent and prolonged rains which caused water logging and high incidence of all pests. The rains caused hindrance in timely spray operations and washing down effect of insecticides wherever sprayed.

(c) and (d) As per the information received from the Textile Ministry the import of cotton has been under open general licence at zero duty since April, 1994. Even though India is an exporter of cotton every year some spinning mills prefer to import varying quantities of cotton depending on their particular requirements. The quantity of imports varies from year to year and depends on a number of factors including the demand for domestic availability of particular varieties, differential between domestic and international prices of cotton etc.

(e) The production of cotton during 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98 in India and in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh is given below:—

| Year | All India | Gujarat | Andhra Pradesh |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1995-96 | 169.2 | 32.20 | |
| 1996-97 | 177.90 | 34.25 | IX |
| 1997-98 (estimated) | I4s.ua | 39.00 | il ' |

The import of Cotton during 1995-96. 1996-97 and 1997-98 is as under:—

| | |
|---|---|
| 1995-96 | 0.05 lakh bales |
| 1996-97 | 0.30 lakh bales |
| 1997-98 | 5.00 lakh bales |

**Streamlining of Agricultural Credit for the farmers**

141. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state the steps taken for effective streamlining of argicultural credit for the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): With a view to